

Monday, March 10, 2008

Middle class anxieties arise everywhere I travel in our community.

Consider this exchange at the Robert Moses Middle School in North Babylon at a town meeting I hosted, in conjunction with Cablevision, on protecting children from Internet predators.

During my comments, I spoke about legislation I cosponsored that beefs up federal law enforcement resources to investigate sexual predators on the internet (currently the federal government only investigates two percent of the files in its Internet Crimes Against Children database).

After providing the details of this legislation, which passed the House last year, I said this, "This issue doesn't begin and end on the Floor of the House or the Oval Office. It begins in your kitchens, living rooms and dens. We have to be partners on this issue - increasing federal law enforcement resources to investigate and punish online predators. But a federal response alone won't work without your leadership at home."

I saw some scowls in the audience. One woman raised her hand.

"This economy is so bad I have to work two jobs," she said. "I don't have the time you think I have to do what you're asking."

Another woman said, "I'm with her."

Although I still believe that government cannot be a substitute for parents, these two women reflect the acute economic anxiety that is gripping the middle class and working families - an anxiety stoked by six years of economic policies that plowed subsidies into special interests (oil companies, HMOs, college lenders) at the expense of middle class earners. The average American worker saw their real income decline about \$1,100, while seeing gas prices and health insurance premiums double and home heating costs triple. These Americans are working harder and have less to show for it.

I am fighting for a sweeping series of middle class and working family initiatives that will provide real relief: lower energy and health costs, provide fundamental tax reform and relief, expand affordability for college, make improvements to quality of life and foster job growth through federal infrastructure investments. An underlying strategy is my "Next Generation Energy Security Initiative" which would create a new generation of jobs, reduce energy costs and reduce our dependence on foreign oil."

Today, I unveil a series of blogs on "Middle Class Stories/Middle Class Solutions." I hope you will check my website periodically to learn more about what people are saying about their economic conditions and what I am doing to respond. And email me your own thoughts and experiences [here](#) .